

# **HEALTH AND SAFETY IN EMPLOYMENT ACT 2002**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (HSE Act), an employer has legal responsibilities to an employee. At the same time an employee, also has legal responsibilities to look after him/herself and ensure that his work does not effect anyone else.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY IN EMPLOYMENT ACT 2002**

Employers must take all practicable steps to ensure the safety of employees while at work by:

- providing and maintaining a safe working environment;
- providing and maintaining safety and health facilities;
- ensuring that employees are not exposed to hazards arising out of the arrangement of the workplace, the disposal, manipulation, organization, processing, storage, transport of goods, working or using equipment either in the workplace itself, or near the workplace and under the employer's control; and
- developing procedures for dealing with any emergency which may arise.

## **PROVIDING INFORMATION**

Part of your employer's responsibilities are to provide information in a manner that is easily understood

- the identified hazards that you will encounter;
- the identified hazard that you will or may create;
- the steps to take with those hazards to prevent harm;
- what to do in an emergency;
- where all safety clothing, equipment and materials are kept, and the training in the correct usage.

## **OUR SERVICE TO YOU**

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is available to help employers and employees improve safety at work by providing information, advice, education and enforcement.

## **PREVENTING STRESS AND FATIGUE**

There are many points at which interventions can occur to prevent stress and fatigue.

### **PRIMARY PREVENTION (PREVENTING PROBLEMS FROM HAPPENING)**

#### **Make Work Congenial**

1. Take active steps to design jobs and tasks so that people are mentally and physically stimulated and thus enjoy their work.
2. Design the physical environment (workstations, lighting, air-conditioning etc) with human factors in mind, so that people can work under optimum conditions.

#### **Consider the way work is organised**

3. Job and task design - provide optimal levels of physical and mental activity interspersed with appropriate breaks to allow adequate recuperation. (Ask the question: What cycle of work and rest ensures optimum performance?- e.g. computer workers.)
4. Design rosters accordingly.
5. Ensure adequate staffing levels.

#### **Manage people considerately**

6. Select people who fit the requirements of the task.
7. Train people so they can do the work /tasks effectively.
8. Encourage participation in management.
9. Make sure that work/tasks are defined clearly
10. Provide feedback to employees about their performance and provide for feedback from employees about the performance of supervisors.
11. Provide support for people at work - when they encounter problems doing their work, or when they have emotional or family difficulties.
12. Create mechanisms for resolving interpersonal difficulties at work.

#### **Promote health and fitness**

13. A positive, sensitive interest by organisations in the promotion of personal health and fitness is encouraged.

## **SECONDARY PREVENTION (PREVENTING PROBLEMS FROM GETTING WORSE)**

### **Train for enhanced “coping” skills**

This is the traditional “stress management” approach, in which the individual is expected to improve his/her state of adaptation to the requirements of the job. The power to change the job to fit the person lies with the organisation, and is primary prevention. While the “stress management” strategy has a part to play, it is obvious that primary prevention is to be preferred. The “stress management” approach on its own will not compensate for jobs that place unreasonable demands on people.

## **TERTIARY PREVENTION (HELPING PEOPLE WITH PROBLEMS)**

Arrange for appropriate treatment and rehabilitation for the person suffering from work-related stress.

Where work has been identified as a cause or partial cause for the problems that have arisen, employers should re-evaluate their primary prevention strategies and other control measures to prevent further occurrences.

## **OCCUPATIONAL OVERUSE SYNDROME (OOS)**

### **What is OOS?**

OOS is a collective term for a range of conditions (including injury), causing discomfort or persistent pain in muscles, tendons and soft tissues.

### **The causes**

OSS may develop over a period of time. It is usually caused or aggravated by types of work where sustained or constrained postures, repetitive movement, and/or forceful movements are involved.

One of the favored explanations for OOS is that it is caused by muscles being held tense or tight for too long.

A tense muscle squeezes on the small blood vessels in the muscle, slowing the flow of blood. When a muscle is tense for too long, it switches to an inefficient form of working.

This uses up energy very quickly, tires the muscle, and leads to a built-up of acid waste products, which make the muscle hurt. Muscles and tendons can withstand fatigue and can recover if they are given a variety of tasks and regular rest breaks, without these, muscles and tendons may be strained beyond their capacity for short-term recovery.

## Prevention

There are five main ways to prevent Occupational Overuses Syndrome:

- design equipment and tasks with people in mind;
- organise a reasonable workload;
- pay attention to the work environment (lighting and air circulation);
- train and educate all staff to adopt correct working postures;
- use safe methods of work

All these points highlight the need for a safety policy to be written and adopted.

## FURTHER READING

The Pocket Ergonomised and other publications free from Occupational Safety and Health Services - Department of Labour

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**If you would like a list of our other community resources, or to be put on our mailing list, contact us at:**



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Visit North Shore Community and Social Services Inc.  
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